

^Pool (From Previous Page)

the way people lived, and it affected everyone," Rios says. "Suddenly, people were afraid to come spend time with friends, and it just wasn't possible during the lockdown."

The public pool is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 8 p.m.

"A lot of people like to come for a peaceful swim in the daytime, when others are at work or in school," Rios says of the pool patrons. "Then, families will come in the evenings, because it's relaxing after a long day, and of course it's fun to spend activity time with the kids."

All children visiting the pool must be accompanied by adults. Staff do not allow parents to drop children off at the curb and leave them to swim unsupervised.

"This isn't any kind of daycare or baby-sitting facility," Rios says. "We are here to provide and maintain a safe facility that benefits all."

As spring bursts over South Texas, Rios believes a lot of residents who made resolutions in January to further their health and to lose weight or exercise more will find ways to meet their goals by swimming.

"Wanting to be healthy, to take better care of ourselves, to be fitter and just to be in better shape, that's a natural thing," he says.

"It's so easy to give up on a New Year's resolution when there are so many distractions, work, school, and other stress factors. This is the place to come to when you really want to be better and feel better."

Swimming is regarded as one of the healthiest exercises because of its low impact on the body while it still works on almost all of the body's muscles at the same time, and Rios believes it is ideally suited for people of all ages and abilities.

"The pool is four feet deep, so if you just want to walk and get your exercise that way, it's perfect," he says. "If you want to swim laps, it's deep enough for that too."

Rios is an avid runner, but admits that he looks forward to a swim when daytime heat becomes too intense.

"Sometimes, I will use the pool to relax and stretch and exercise after I run, and other times I will use swimming as my exercise," he says. "The one great thing about swimming is that it's an enjoyable way to stay in motion."

Rios knows that he and the other four lifeguards at the pool will see crowds return in the spring and summer, and children will again be able to expend their energy in water games. He also hopes those who enjoyed the pool's

benefits for their own health will likewise return in groups.

Rios, 21, is a 2019 Cotulla High School graduate and has begun a degree in business management through Texas A&M University. He hopes to



"It's relaxing after a long day..."

return to his degree plan in the future. His daytime job, however, brings him joy because he believes he enables people to better themselves.

"This is a good time to come to the pool," Rios grins. "Come and make new friends."

Come and play volleyball with someone random, or come for family bonding. It's better than going out in the heat, and it's safer than trying to run on streets without sidewalks.

"This is the place that people can come to at any time of their lives and feel good about themselves," he adds. "And besides, the water's lovely."

Community

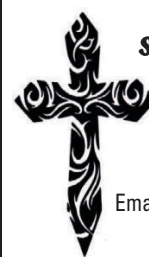
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